
**HISTORIC PRESERVATION REVIEW BOARD
STAFF REPORT AND RECOMMENDATION**

Property Address:	2001 15th Street, NW	Agenda
Landmark/District:	U Street Historic District	X Consent Calendar
		X Concept Review
Meeting Date:	May 23, 2013	Alteration
H.P.A. Number:	11-407	X New Construction
Staff Reviewer:	Steve Callcott	Demolition
		Subdivision

Jair Lynch Development Partners, with plans developed by WDG Architecture PLLC, seeks ongoing conceptual review for construction of a nine-story apartment building at the southeast corner of 15th and V Streets. After several reviews in 2011 and 2012, the Board found the concept for the project to be compatible with the character of the historic district.

The project returns due to changes to the penthouse that are different from what was presented and approved. When shown in concept in November 2011, the penthouse consisted of two small masses of different heights connected by a sunscreen for a roof terrace. When the Board last saw the project in October 2012, the penthouse was larger, with the stair tower and elevator overruns connected into a single mass with a somewhat smaller sunscreen.

Revised Proposal

Since the development of the construction plans, the penthouse has grown larger. Code requirements for the roof terrace have necessitated adding a second stair enclosure at the east side of the building; together with DC zoning regulations that require that all rooftop elements be located within a single enclosure (e.g. connected) and of the same height, this has significantly increased the size of the penthouse from what the Board last saw. In addition, while the absolute height of the penthouse has remained the same, the height of the building at the top of the parapet has been reduced by 4 feet, resulting in the penthouse being proportionally larger in relation to the underlying building.

In order to mitigate the larger penthouse, the applicants are proposing to “deconstruct” the connection between the primary penthouse elements and the second stair into a series of vertical slats. The north wall of the second stair enclosure is also modestly sloped to reduce its visibility. The sunscreen has been retained on the west side of the penthouse, but pulled back from the edge of the building and simplified in profile.

Evaluation

It is unfortunate that the current zoning restrictions have the effect of making the penthouse larger than it needs to be. While the requirement that penthouse elements be connected and of a uniform height is a common zoning variance request – and is a

provision proposed for repeal in the updating zoning regulations -- the applicants are proposing a matter-of-right project and seeking to avoid the time and expense of a variance request.

The proposed penthouse will be more visible than the previous versions. While the tall, non-contributing Campbell Heights building immediately to the south will largely obscure views of the penthouse from the south, it will likely have the most visibility from 15th Street to the north, where the buildings are lower and the grade rises above W Street and Florida Avenue. The efforts to break the massing of the penthouse up and provide it with some variety should help mitigate its larger size. Ultimately, the building is a large apartment building in which a large penthouse is not an uncommon feature and while it will be seen, and ideally would be smaller as previously presented, it will not have a significant impact on the character of the historic district.

Recommendation

The HPO recommends approval of the revised concept, with final approval delegated to staff.